



THE UNION

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BRITISH NORTH AMERICAN PROVINCES

AND

THE HON. JOSEPH HOWE.

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UNION OF THE COLONIES

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From the earliest period of American history no thought has more persistently occupied the minds of American statesmen than that of Union. The leading spirits in the old 13 colonies were ever dreaming of it, and when their union was accomplished after the revolution, it was not long before the loyal colonies began to think that they also had a common ground and bond of union.

For a long time these tendencies were discouraged by the mother country. The foolish policy which frowned on Franklin's plan was continued until the growing indifference to all colonies took root in England. The statesmen of the colonies still longed for organization, but the statesmen of the mother country followed the rule of dividing in order to govern, while there never lacked in any small community ardent local "patriots" who saw "tyranny and spoliation" in any comprehensive scheme, and who would rather be chiefs of their own villages than take their places, according to their real abilities, in a larger assembly.

The first union of which we read is the confederacy of 1643 of the "United Colonies of New England," by which they entered into "a firm and perpetual league" for defence and for trade. This confederacy soon fell to pieces, and in 1696 another and more comprehensive scheme was decided on and laid before the Board of Trade and Plantations, but was there suppressed. In 1754 a convention was held at Albany, and a plan of union devised by Dr. Franklin was selected out of many others, and, after a debate of 12 days,

adopted—Connecticut only dissenting. The Board of Trade refused even to bring this scheme under the notice of the King. The manner in which union was at last achieved is known to all.

Now it will be apparent to all who look under the surface, that had the British Government been able to communicate with a body of more weight and unity of action than the Provincial Assemblies, the rupture would not have occurred; for Lord North publicly asserted "that if the Americans would propose to Parliament any mode by which they would engage themselves to raise in their own way and by their own grants their share of contribution to their common defence the quarrel on the subject of taxation was at an end." But there was no common legislation, except that of the Imperial Parliament. One colony would grant and another would not—each was jealous of giving more than another, and the inevitable village demagogues were ready to set one against another and all against the British Government. Even after the Continental Congress had met, the matter would have been arranged had the Government been able to recognize it as a legal body. History is against those who assert that a Confederation of British North American Colonies would tend to separate them from the Crown—the rebellion of the old colonies took place under their disunited legislatures.

But beyond all the men who ever made a study of American politics the gaze of good old Governor Pownall penetrated farthest

into the future. "Let Great Britain," he said, "be no more considered as the kingdom of this isle only with many appendages of provinces, colonies, settlements, &c., but as a grand marine dominion consisting of our possessions in the Atlantic and in America united into a one centre where the Seat of Government is held. Such a plan would build up this country to a degree of glory and prosperity beyond the example of any age that has yet passed." Governor Pownall's ideas were despised, and are now only to be found in old books, while the names of Hancock and Adams are in every mouth. They blasted the fair prospect of empire offered to our race. They and such as they split its power and arrayed brother against brother, and they receive the praises instead of the execrations of a large portion of the Anglo-Saxon race.

Such a scheme is yet practicable if there were statesmen to carry it out, but public opinion in England tends so fast to disintegration of the empire that it is hopeless to attempt to revive it. And it must also be remembered that even now the time of the Imperial Parliament is too much occupied with local, almost municipal, affairs. To introduce there a few colonial members would be to mock the colonies with unreal power, and to throw on it a burden of detail which could not be attended to. It is in a grand council of the empire that the colonies should have their representatives, and there that the external policy of the empire be decided.

But the organization of the empire should not result in a polypus of merely a head and legs, but in a body duly knit together in due subordination of organs. It should commence at the extremities; and before the colonies can demand of the mother country a share in Imperial Councils, they must unite into groups of importance. Delegates from Canada or Prince Edward Island, from New Zealand or Tasmania, from Jamaica or Bermuda, separately, must not complain if they wait the convenience of Colonial Ministers. When the representatives of the American, the Australian, the Asian, the African, or the Pacific colonies go to England they will speak with a voice which will command attention.

This dream of a united empire yet lives in the Colonies. Governor Pownall would have had

the colonies send members of parliament equally with Durham and Chester. The burdens of the empire would be borne by all, and all could share its glories. He even contemplated the time when, owing to the increase of population, the capital of our race would be fixed in America. But no one in England seems to entertain such a scheme. The Hon. Joseph Howe has advocated, with his usual ability, a plan of representation in the Imperial Parliament, but he has avoided the burdens of the empire by proposing to limit the whole colonial representation to ten members, who would be too insignificant in number to have any real power, but would speak on Colonial questions. This would put both parties in a false position; but failing this, the Union of the Colonies has no where met with so able an advocate as Mr Howe. His letters and speeches are published, and the idea of a union of the colonies breathes throughout them all. "If," said he, referring to this plan, "I saw no better scheme, I would say 'at once let us keep our local legislatures and have a President and Central Congress for the higher and external relations of the United Provinces.'" And again: "Under Federal union we should form a large and prosperous nation lying between the other two branches of the British family, and our duty would be to keep them at peace." No one has ever pleaded the cause of the colonies more eloquently—no one has dwelt more on their resources and strength. Taught by him the youth of Nova Scotia learned to look to a wider career than that of Nova Scotia politics, to a closer union of the colonies—to a permanent connection of the whole with Britain.

Those who, like the writer, have listened as boys to his eloquence—heard him descant on the importance and the wealth of Canada—who, as men have seen for themselves these resources—are amazed that he now exhausts his whole force of vituperation on those provinces he formerly used to exalt. His recent pamphlet has stultified his whole career, for he is not against this scheme or that scheme, but is against Union with Canada on any terms whatever.

It must be evident to Mr. Howe that no body of men in England, or in the Colonies, are ready to take up his scheme. The Colonies are now taking up that which he pointed out

as the next best scheme—a Federal Union. He speaks of it now as a tentative towards annexation and, strange contradiction, as a threat to the United States. If it is the first step towards annexation how is it that every annexationist is opposed to it; that it is sneered at and denounced by the U. S. papers; that the whole influence of the U. S. Consul's party is against it?

Now, to assert that Mr. Howe is not a loyal man would be a falsehood. I believe him to be one of the most loyal men in the province, and more, that he is a most disinterested man in all matters of property. But in any matter of political credit or ambition no man could be more grasping. Proud of his great natural gifts he is a disappointed man, and with reason. No mark of imperial favor has been bestowed on him. The Commission of the Fisheries was a local matter to the governorships betowed on men vastly his inferiors, like Daly and Hincks. Forty years of politics have done their work—years of canvassing, of agitation, of quarrels with governors and men in authority. Aiming to be the "people's man," he has not overcome that wildness of statement and fervour of imagination which so weigh with popular assemblies. This scheme of Federal Union was put before the public by a body in which he, being Imperial Commissioner, could have no seat, and in which a seat had been refused to his mouthpiece, Mr. Annand. The dream of his life is near being realized, and he has had no hand in it. It is not surprising then that it should meet with his opposition.

Never, even in the hottest of Mr. Howe's diatribes, did the fervour of his eloquence lead him into so many contradictions and rash statements as now in his recent pamphlet. The scheme of Confederation is misrepresented from its inception. The English public is asked to condemn it as one of "spoliation and robbery"—it is "Schleswig-Holstein," "an oppression," a scheme "forced on an unwilling people." Yet it is true that all the Canadians have done was to go down to Charlottetown, where the Maritime Provinces were debating a smaller union, and ask them to consider a union of all British North America. Delegates then met, appointed from both political parties in all the colonies, the plan of union was adopted, and all that has been done since has

been done by a majority of their various legislatures. The plan had come even in the very way Mr. Howe used to desire, viz., "the project of union has come from the other colonies." He has now the assurance he so longed for—"I should like of all things to be assured the French-Canadians favoured a union." Now that Mr. Howe has another object, he systematically underrates the resources of Canada; but his language hitherto has invariably been, "that noble province," "that magnificent province"—"one of the noblest countries it has ever been my good fortune to behold." "Of vast proportions, boundless resources, and surpassing beauty:" travelling through which you feel "that Canada must become a great nation;" and that in 1839, when Canada was an infant to what she is now. He makes the most of a deficiency which, during the last year, has been caused by preparations against Fenian raids; excites English prejudice by allusion to the Canadian tariff, which is now very little higher than that of Nova Scotia; and finally settles our province by exulting that she possesses no coal—forgetting to remark that the unparalleled water power of Canada affords facilities for manufacture unequalled in the world.

But, as Mr. Howe goes on, he is still more contradictory. He draws a lively picture of a Canadian "dead-lock," and then speaks of the Lower Provinces being swallowed up in a larger assemblage. Can he not see that, if this be true, the Lower Provinces must hold the balance of power? and, moreover, would Nova Scotia be as much swallowed up there as if she returned two members to the Imperial Parliament? Listen to Mr. Howe, when at Montreal, describing the rivalries of races:

"We Anglo-Saxons, proud of our race, are too apt to forget how largely the Norman-French element entered into its composition. Gradually the distinctions faded, and out of a common ancestry came that new race which has given laws and civilization to the world. So it will be here. Sprung from two of the foremost nations of the earth, speaking two noble languages, who doubts that a race will grow up in North America equal to the requirements of their country, and proud of the great families from which they sprung."

Nothing strikes one more in perusing his pamphlet than the stress laid on the loyalty

of the Maritime Provinces, and the insinuations against the loyalty of the Canadians. No one questions the loyalty of the Nova Scotians, and we all remember that a natural cause of discontent existing in all the colonies was here fanned by demagogues into a very small flame, but let him remember that alone, of all the colonies, the Canadian people have given their lives for their sovereign.

From 1776 to 1866—the defence of Quebec, to the affair of Ridgeway—Canadians of both races have shed their blood freely in defence of British connection. From the proclamation of General Montgomery to that of Sweeney, the burden has invariably been—“We have no quarrel with Canadians, but with Englishmen—share with us the glories of the Republic—its equality, its wealth.” Let Chippewa and Chateaugay tell the answer. The descendants of the DeSalaberrys and the Robinsons have the same answer ready now.

Walk the streets of the chief cities of Canada and you will see a stronger contrast to United States manners and customs than in any other of the American dependencies of Great Britain, and yet we have lived in daily intimate communication with our republican neighbours along the whole length of our frontier. We have separate traditions and different aspirations. The family history of Upper Canadians tells of a fundamental political antagonism in the past. But Mr. Howe, after talking all his life of colonial nationality and nation, is scandalised because Lord Monck uses the word “nation” in his address to Parliament. In a previous quotation is an example of Mr. Howe’s use of the word. Until recently it was a pet word of his own. He says in another speech: “It is impossible to fancy you are in a province—a colony. You feel at every step that Canada must become a great nation.” Even the proposal of a monarchy is not new to him, but he rejected it lest we might have a dynasty of idiots or might give offence to the United States. Nothing, however, can show Mr. Howe’s inconsistency better than his exaggerated picture of the defenceless position of Canada, owing to her frost-bound shores and extended frontier;—while a little further on he claims the Saskatchewan territory, and urges its settlement as a crown colony. If Canada be so helpless, how can Britain pro-

tect the Saskatchewan? Why plant a colony in the heart of the continent and induce an emigration which she would shamefully have to abandon? If Canada be lost England could not even communicate with the territory, much less settle or protect it. And again on the American Union—in one page he speaks of its strength, in another of its approaching dissolution, its vain hope of union. If Mr. Howe believes that, which he must, is there not a chance of our surviving which he does not touch upon?

This question of the defencelessness of Canada never comes up without bringing to indignant recollection that shameful debate in the British House of Commons, when it was proposed by “gallant” officers and listened to with patience, to leave *all* the British North American Provinces to their fate, and simply confine the action of Great Britain to a naval war. Surely this is non-intervention with a vengeance—enough to rouse the sleeping hero population of Westminster Abbey. No one hinted that it was the duty of the empire to assist a colony; no one said that Canada had already borne the brunt of two wars without a murmur; no one said that as the fields of Canada and blood of Canadians mainly were in question it might be just to consider them. Well may the descendants of the United Empire loyalists blush as they think of it and ask—can these be the children of the men who fought Spain when she was mistress of the world; who withstood Europe under Napoleon; who fought and conquered at Plassey and at Agincourt? Why talk any more of Armstrong guns and breech-loaders. War to these arithmetical statesmen is a matter of simple addition. Wellington, at Waterloo, should have counted his guns and saved useless bloodshed by surrender when he found himself outnumbered. England no longer expects every man to do his duty; unless the duty be one which pays in solid £ s. d. But listen to Mr. Howe’s former opinion:—“Taking the population of the British North American colonies at 2½ millions, every fifth person should be able to draw a trigger—giving 500,000 men capable of bearing arms. Such a force would be powerless as an invading army, but in defence of these provinces invincible by any force that could be sent from abroad. Put into these men the spirit which animated

"the Greek, the Roman, the Dutchman, and the Swiss—let them feel that they are to protect their own hearthstones; and, my word for it, the heroic blood which beats in their veins will be true to its characteristics. How often have we heard that our republicans were going to over-run the provinces. They have attempted it once or twice, but have always been beaten out; and I do not hesitate to say that the British-Americans, over whom the old flag flies, are able to defend every inch of their territory, even though her Majesty's troops were withdrawn." True, the times are somewhat changed now, but the population of the colonies is greater, and we count on the assistance of England. Moreover, the United States have now a Poland in their borders, which may be taken into account in the calculation.

Repeatedly, in this pamphlet, does Mr Howe urge the Canadians to cultivate "amicable relations with their neighbors" and the impression is disingenuously conveyed that Canada by this confederation (which he elsewhere represents as tending toward annexation) seeks to assume "an attitude of menace" to the United States.

Canada, who would have to bear the whole brunt of the attack, seek to menace! The thing is absurd. Every cause of quarrel which has yet arisen is on English account--down to this last Fenian raid,—but though damped by House of Commons arithmetic, with the helplessness of England to assist paraded before the world, the Canadas have yet the courage to hope for a successful defence, or at least an honorable resistance. It must be admitted that we have done things we should not have done, in the heat of our disputes. Montrealers have egged a Governor, but the Londoners have stoned a King. Mr. Howe himself in the height of his dispute with Lord Falkland, talked about outraged Nova Scotians 'hiring a negro to horse-whip a Lieut.-Governor through the streets of Halifax;' even that pink of loyalty—Prince Edward Island required a detachment of soldiers to explain the propriety of submitting to the 'outrage and indignity' of paying rent to the English land-owners who had received their lands from the King. We have all sown our wild oats, and if Canada has sown more than

others, remember her special temptations, and as Mr. Howe would have said in old days 'her boundless extent and capabilities.' But while we admit the disgrace of egging a Governor General escorted by dragoons, it is too bad of Mr. Howe to add the crime of insulting his lady to the long catalogue of our sins. Lady Elgin was never affronted in Canada but once;—at Toronto—when Mr. Howe, during a most eloquent speech, carried away with the glorious vision of the union of the colonies, illustrated the fact that their very slight differences would only bind them the closer, by a story, drawn from his inexhaustible budget, which caused her ladyship to withdraw from the gallery.

No one living in Europe can imagine the extent to which party feeling is carried in small communities. The smaller the community if it has a full government staff the higher runs the excitement. P. E. Island, with a total population of 80,000, has the full paraphernalia of government—her Governor, her two Houses, her Ministry, and her ministerial crises. There the battle of religions is fought, the education question, the introduction of the bible into schools. The field is small, but the combatants are lively, and, as must be the case, when members of the same family or traders in the same way of business are contending for the honour of seats at Her Majesty's Council, the disputes are acrimonious to a degree. There is a vigour and heartiness in Colonial abuse to which the well-bred cynical sneering of the "Saturday Review," or the ponderous denunciations of the "Times" are gentle music. Canadians have not had a monopoly of that style of abuse as Mr. Howe very well knows. It is to avoid this that so many of the quieter sort desire a union of the Colonies, that our statesmen may have a wider field for their energies, that the fate of a ministry may not depend on the making a road to a certain village, or the building of a bridge where it is not wanted, to balance the building of another where it is necessary.

The main difficulty of union has always been with the smaller States and the smaller politicians. As for Mr. Howe he is a man of great abilities, and could never be ignored (we have suffered enough already from trying to ignore him), but behind him are the fourth-rate politicians—those who are noisy on the

stump and quiet in the Council, who feel that in a union of all the colonies they at least would be snuffed out. Here is the outrage—the oppression of the minority. Little Rhode Island refused to send a delegate to the convention of 1787; and did not accede to the result for several years. When in 1820 the Province of Cape Breton was annexed to Nova Scotia it was allowed to return two members to the Nova Scotian Assembly. Its population was eight thousand, only one-tenth of Prince Edward Island; but a wail of sorrow and indignation went up to the Imperial Legislature. The most dreadful future was conjured up, and a petition was forwarded to England in the “tyranny and oppression” vein which might answer as a model for Mr. Howe’s. The hard-hearted Parliament would not listen to those poor islanders under the heel of Nova Scotia; and yet Cape Breton has not rebelled, and even supports her hard fate with tranquillity.

To read Mr. Howe’s book one would suppose that the Canadians were invading Nova Scotia, as the Germans did Schleswig-Holstein. He tells us of the hard fate of those provinces as apropos to the occasion. Fortunately, he also proves that we have not, and never can have, a fleet or army. Who could believe, after all this, that the Confederation resolutions were passed by a two-third majority of the Nova Scotia popular chamber?

On a matter of so much importance the most moderate statesman might well differ in detail; but Mr. Howe now denounces the whole scheme of union. He will have no union with such a country as Canada on any terms. His mission now is one of disorganization. The future he now prognosticates is Canada and New Brunswick annexed to the United States, and Nova Scotia hanging on to the empire, the neck of the peninsula fortified and the sea protected by British gunboats. All his glorious dreams have suddenly faded, and the preservation of Nova Scotia to the Crown is all that can be hoped for. Messrs. Bolton and Webber would go a little further in the same direction. They would abandon not only Canada and New Brunswick, but Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. Even to their bold spirits Nova Scotia appears defensible, and they would have it held, for imperial purposes only, like Aden, Malta, and Gibraltar. A residence

among the Nova Scotians has convinced them of the unfitness of that people for self-government, and they advocate a return to the old system. They speak with contempt of the public men of the colony, and describe incendiarism, infanticide and homicide as rampant in Halifax, unchecked and unnoticed owing to the lax administration of the laws under responsible government. Dear, tranquil old Halifax! Where is your champion of former days? Fighting in the same boat with these slanderous subalterns. Well may they confess having had “misgivings in putting forth their book.” The amazing wonder is that Mr. Howe can refrain from falling foul of them. If these anticipated battles of theirs are to be fought, the British lion would do well not to sit quite so near the edge of the continent.

Let the people of England not be deceived by Mr. Howe or Messrs. Bolton and Webber. It is not separation we want from England, but a durable connection. We want to share in the councils of the empire, but not by returning three or ten members to an imperial parliament of 600. We know the respect England has for force, and we want to aggregate our forces. We want a united government, so that when the British Government has anything to say it will not have to concert with five provincial parliaments, each with its crotchety man to call out “tyranny and oppression.” We want some share of the sympathy and blandishment so lavishly bestowed on the United States, and we will give a better return. Then, when those great outlying portions of our race, which remain attached to the parent stem, are themselves organized, we may say to our common sovereign, We share the dangers of the empire in war—its profits in peace; we have governed ourselves well, we are worthy of your consideration; we ask now for admission into those portions of your councils which concern our common welfare.

But nothing can be said on that head more appropriate than the words of Lord Durham, the Queen’s High Commissioner:—
“I do not anticipate that a Colonial Legislature thus strong and thus self-governing would desire to abandon the connection with Great Britain, and I look to it as the only means of fostering such a national feeling throughout them as would effectual-

"ly counterbalance whatever tendencies may
 "now exist towards separation. No large
 "community of free and intelligent men will
 "long feel contented with a political system
 "which places them, because it places their
 "country, in a position of inferiority to their
 "neighbours. The colonist of Great Britain
 "is linked, it is true, to a mighty empire, and
 "the glories of its history, the visible signs
 "of its present power and the civilization of
 "its people are calculated to raise and gratify
 "his national pride. But he feels, also, that
 "his link to that empire is one of remote de-

"pendence; he catches but passing and in-
 "adequate glimpses of its power and pros-
 "perity; he knows that in its government he
 "and his own countrymen have no voice. If
 "we wish to prevent the extension of this
 "influence it can only be done by raising up
 "for the North American colonist some na-
 "tionality of his own; by elevating these
 "small and unimportant communities into a
 "society having some objects of a national
 "importance and thus giving their inhabitants
 "a country which they will be unwilling to
 "see absorbed into one more powerful."

A NOVA SCOTIAN IN CANADA.

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